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VI.

"FLEXIBLE MAJORITIES."

IN his very able and catholic paper entitled "A Perilous Balance," in the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW for April, Mr. Rossiter Johnson says much that appeals to the good sense of every well-disposed American, whether of native or foreign birth. Certain of his conclusions, however, are hardly borne out when considered in the light of reasonable non-partisanship. It may probably be assumed that he means "Mugwumps" when he alludes to "Such cranks as choose to band themselves into little makeweight parties that constitute balances of power," and he kindly proceeds, in the next sentence, to remove the somewhat opprobrious taint that might attach to the term by calling for "majorities so flexible that they can be cast one way at one election and the opposite way at the next."

That is precisely the end for which Independents or Mugwumps exist, but Mr. Johnson seems to lose sight of the fact that before he can establish his flexible majorities of "twenty to one" on a working basis, there must needs be a modest beginning liable to denunciation as "little makeweight parties," and the like, to which he refers with such undisguised contempt. Every Republican probably regards the birth of his party as the inception of a genuine reform movement, but it is within the recollection of men not so very old that when the "free soil" defection took place from the Whig ranks, nay, later, when the Republican party itself came into existence, its members were the Mugwumps of their day, and were freely accused of "pharisaism," of setting themselves upon a "holier than thou" platform, and so on; phrases which every newspaper reader will recognize as familiar jibes cast at the "Independents" during the last presidential canvass. They are, in fact, phrases which rise naturally to the lips of every culprit when he finds himself in the presence of a jury that does not agree with defendant's counsel.

Mr. Johnson seems much disturbed at the nearly equal division of political parties, and the danger is, no doubt, grave in certain aspects. But there are compensations. We are all agreed that there should be larger majorities in every election, but irreconcilable differences arise when we attempt to decide from which party the majority should be drawn. In ordinary years of peace and prosperity the vote of every individual is largely influenced by personal considerations, mainly dependent, perhaps, upon the voter's pocket. The reasonable *pros* and *cons* regarding protection and free trade, for instance, are so nearly balanced that no considerable majority can be counted upon for either side, and so with regard to almost all the questions that arise in the ordinary course of events. But the moment a great vital matter distinctly involving right and wrong comes to the fore the "perilous balance" disappears, and the majority on the side of right becomes irresistible wherever there is a free vote of all the people. Such a crisis has not arisen since the great overturning of 1860-61. Leaving the slave States out of the question, since a free vote of all the people was impossible there, a glance at the returns will show that the majorities for the Government were overwhelming in all the Northern States, and the "perilous balance" was restored only when returning peace suffered the conditions once more to become normal. There might easily be honest differences of judgment concerning the proper course to be pursued regarding the treatment of the lately seceded States, and, in fact, these differences so promptly asserted themselves that the two great parties redivided practically upon traditional lines. If, however, any party should come before the people with some measure so obviously unwise that it could not be disguised by lying, the November elections would not leave public sentiment in doubt. Unquestionably

one great trouble is the facility with which lies are multiplied. Mr. Johnson permits us to infer that he never heard of Democrats or Republicans rebuking their respective journals for lying in the interest of their own parties, or of a "Mugwump rebuking a Mugwump paper for lying on all sides." I can only account for his failure to meet such advocates of truth on the ground that, in his opinion, as soon as a Republican begins to rebuke lying in the interest of his own party he is no longer a Republican. As for Mugwumps, the chief reason why they are reviled of both parties is that they never fail to denounce lying whenever they find it. When they do so fail they are no longer worthy the name.

CHARLES LEDYARD NORTON.

VII.

PERSONAL IMMORTALITY.

THERE is nothing so pleasing to human expectation as personal immortality. To be assured of everlasting life without pain or care, without weariness or satiety, with friendships unalloyed and with knowledge ever increasing, makes all trouble and sorrow in this world seem as nothing—as the mere dust that floats with the passing breeze. But is this pleasing dream an inspiration? Do desire and expectation constitute an infallible premise upon which to found unquestionable opinions? And is there adequate compensation for the loss of these cherished ideals?

Man's body, like those of other animals, is composed of the elements of matter in chemical combination, and finally after its brief life, returns to form part of the original stock from which it was constructed. Does there dwell in this corruptible body an undying and incorruptible personality? Does the Creator do aught contrary to the universal and recognized laws of life and death? And is it not generally conceded that anything and everything that will live "to eternity" has existed "from eternity?"

The glorious sun must, in the nature of things, go out in darkness. The stars that "glitter on the mantle of night" must finally disappear. There may be a new birth of suns and stars, resultant from the same cause which placed those now shining in the heavens, and thus, by renewal, add light and lustre to the universe through a seeming eternity. So with all animate and inanimate life; it is immortal in the principle of reproduction, whose cycles roll on unceasingly unless checked by superior and antagonizing forces. Reproduction is therefore an immortal principle precluding the probability of personal immortality. With life ends man's usefulness to the world or to his Creator. Is it probable that he will be preserved for pain or pleasure, for reward or punishment? The monarchs of the forest may be reproduced for an eternity of years with unchanged and recurring seasons.

The grain of wheat from Egypt's tomb lost none of its vitality during a sleep of three thousand years. The frail, sensitive plant is equally immortal in its nature. If there is anything on earth too beautiful to die, it is the rose. Yet with all its beauty and fragrance the hoar frost regards it not, and the summer's sun, after painting its loveliness, withers it without remorse, and but for the hope inspired by this reproductive principle, we should mourn its loss and weep at its destruction. Now we can truly say and rejoice that its beauty never fades and its fragrance is everlasting.

Is man an exception to this wise and wonderful provision of nature? And is it not ample compensation to know that old age, decrepitude and uselessness are to give place to youth, strength and beauty, and that man's intelligence and virtues become an immortal inheritance by his children?

E. H. ROON.